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27 March 1964

*Records Center  
OD/OCI  
68-T-355 Box 1 of 3*

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Intelligence)  
SUBJECT : OCI Relations with the White House

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1. OCI's relations with Mr. Bundy's staff remain as close and cordial as they were in the Kennedy administration. Our relations with General Clifton are also good, but we deal with him considerably less than before. It is clear that he has been to some extent relieved of his substantive duties and assigned additional administrative and ceremonial ones with the departure of the Naval and Air Force aides. However, he remains at least nominally responsible for intelligence briefings of the President, and either he or an assistant probably does perform this function when the President is out of Washington.

2. This is not the whole story, unfortunately. General Clifton clearly does not see President Johnson regularly in Washington for intelligence briefing purposes. We believe Mr. Bundy also sees him less often and on a more formal basis than he did President Kennedy.

3. Our officers deliver the Checklist to Bromley Smith, and to Clifton on the progressively fewer occasions he is present. Smith gives it to Bundy for his own information; Clifton occasionally indicates he will make an effort to put it before the President, but we have little evidence that he succeeds. (On the other hand, it appears that the President does read the Checklist when he is out of town.)

4. The Review is delivered to the White House Situation Room by courier in the evening. It apparently then is passed through channels unknown to us to Mr. Moyers or Mr. Valenti. It eventually returns to Smith's office with such notations as "returned by Valenti" and little else. We get no indication whether the President has read it or, if he has, how he reacted to it.

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5. Thus the major difference between this and the Kennedy administration is the total lack of feedback, not because our contacts are uncooperative, but because they themselves do not deal directly with the President on intelligence matters. On the rare occasions when President Kennedy did not get a chance to read the Checklist, we were told. We were also told what he liked and disliked in it, what he wanted to see covered, and what he already knew. This knowledge enabled us to "live the President's problems" and hand-craft a Checklist which would meet them.

6. Without this acute sense of the President's personality and interests, we are groping in the dark, and may in fact be getting further and further away from the target. Most important, we are handicapped in trying to do anything about it because, instead of changing Mr. Kennedy's staff, Mr. Johnson has inserted another layer of his own between them and himself. Efficiency and good bureaucratic practice require us to go on dealing with the old staff, and tact prevents us from by-passing it to open lines to the new. We are therefore worse off than we would be if Mr. Kennedy had been voted out of office.

7. The style of work in the White House and those agencies which work in direct support of it is of course a direct reflection of the President as an individual. Mr. Johnson's desires in the current intelligence field have not yet come clear. It seems likely that he will not follow most situations in as great detail as did his predecessor, but it is unlikely that, after Mr. Kennedy, the Presidency can ever again disengage itself from the day-to-day administration of national security policy to the extent that it did under Mr. Eisenhower. To do his job effectively the President must keep informed. We have no way of knowing whether or not we are now giving him the service he needs.

8. It is well to remember that the Checklist was created because President Kennedy kept getting caught short by gaps in his information. Furthermore, it took six months for his--and his staff's--dissatisfaction with the state of affairs to crystallize into a request for

something new. Fortunately, his immediate staff was in contact with us and turned to us for help. Should this time come with President Johnson, there is no guarantee that the request will come to us.

9. It is clear that both CIA and the national interest would be served by establishing close links to the President's immediate staff, but it is not at all clear from where we sit how this is to be done. We do strongly recommend that you discuss this problem with the DCI.

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